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SPECIAL MESSAGE

OF

JOHN B. NEIL,

GOVERNOR OF IDAHO

TO THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE OF IDAHO TERRITORY

Gentlemen of the Council and House of Representatives The Act approved January 28, 1881, amending section one of the revenue law whereby the tax levy for Territorial purposes is largely reduced will cause you to be held in grateful remembrance by your constituents This Act received very careful consideration and was not adopted until the friends of the measure made it apparent that a sum adequate for all purposes would be realized But these estimates were based upon the assumption that the present prosperous condition of affairs in the Territory would continue and that there is likely to be a large increase in the value of taxable property within the next two years The possibility of a depression in business, or a decline in the value of one or more classes of property from any cause whatever, was not taken into consideration If there should be a falling off in the value of our taxable property, the tax levy would be insufficient to meet current expenses A considerable floating indebtedness, drawing interest would thereby be created To meet such a contingency, I suggest the wisdom of providing for the levying of a small special tax, to be denominated a Sinking Fund, and which, if not required for the purpose specified, shall be held in reserve for the redemption of the Territorial bonds maturing in 1885. It might be safe to postpone the beginning of such special levy until the year 1883 but that this Legislative Assembly should adopt some measure of the kind, is, in my judgment, imperatively demanded There exists in the minds of many of our best citizens an apprehension that so large a reduction of taxes, as has been made, is calculated to injuriously affect the present excellent credit of the Territory To allay such fears, and avert a disaster that will be hurtful to the interests of the Territory, I trust you may now supplement the Act relieving the people from a considerable burden of taxation by one of assurance to creditors, that their interest are to be carefully guarded A measure of this kind would meet the approbation of all good citizens

In concluding this subject, permit me to call your attention to the fears very generally entertained by wise, prudent business men of the East, that the present mania for wild fancy speculations, is likely to result in a most disastrous panic Every interest in this Territory would be sensibly affected by such a catastrophe and I urge the wisdom of making provision for the payment of our debts while we are in a prosperous condition and abundantly able to do so

POLYGAMY

I must again direct attention to the spread of polygamy in this Territory, under the fostering influence of the mormon church As the very reasonable suggestions contained in my communication

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delivered at the opening of your session, have not yet been acted upon. I deem it proper to once more advert to the subject, and urge the immediate adoption of stringent measures to extirpate the evil.

Polygamy is a doctrine of the mormon church, and the practice is urged and made obligatory upon the members of the church for the purpose of binding them more firmly to the organization. The mormon leaders have shrewdly calculated, that, by making of the society a large community of interest in crime, its members can be the more easily persuaded and influenced to aid, in carrying into execution the political schemes of the priesthood.

The more men and women induced to enter into criminal relations, and the larger the number of children born in such relations, the stronger the organization becomes.

The law regards the polygamist as a criminal, and all civilized society looks upon the plural wife as a concubine, and upon her children, to use the least offensive term, as illegitimate. From the penalties imposed by the law, the polygamist naturally goes for protection and defense to the church. Banished from and ostracised by all other society, the plural wife and her children turn instinctively to the same institution for sympathy, and to hear those words of comfort and cheer so necessary to the confiding nature of women and children.

Again The practice is calculated to draw to the mormon church the most vicious and sensual classes of society.

It is obvious, therefore, that polygamy is an element of strength to the church. Those who are familiar with the political policy of the mormon church understand why all practices, devices, and ceremonies, calculated to crush out manhood and independence, have been incorporated into the mormon religious system. It is for the purpose of moulding the minds of the members of the church, so that they will yield implicit obedience to the "advice of counsel" and the commands of the priesthood. Polygamy to attract the sensual; endowment robes, secret oaths, rude, barbarous ceremonies and mummeries, to impress and awe the minds of the weak, ignorant and superstitious, are some of the methods, devices, etc., adopted to secure a spirit of "oneness" among the latter day saints. It must be admitted the means employed have been successful, and that a very powerful organization has been built up, every member of which professes to believe that the design of its leaders, to subvert this government, and on its ruins to erect a theocracy, will ultimately succeed. This may seem a wild fantasy, but I submit in view of what has already been accomplished by the mormon church, whether it is wise to longer ignore the fact that we have in our midst a numerous sect, fully imbued with the idea that they are to rule the land.

No mistaken regard for that clause of the Constitution which guarantees to "every person the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience," should be permitted to stand in the way of a rigid enforcement of the laws against those who insist that it confers upon them license to commit crime. The fact that the practice of polygamy tends to strengthen the mormon church, and makes it more powerful for the accomplishment of the political aspirations of its leaders, renders it imperatively necessary that the practice be suppressed.

With polygamy completely crushed, the power of the priesthood will, to some extent, be broken, and an advance made toward the disintegration of the church. That this must be the end, all agree who have given the subject serious study and investigation; but the people of this country have not yet given the question the consideration necessary to convince them that the mormons are reaching for temporal power in the United States. They are making rapid strides toward the attainment of that purpose on the Pacific coast.

Utah is completely under their control, and by the "spreading out" policy they are seeking to overrun and subdue the States of Colorado and Nevada, and the Territories of Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico and Wyoming. It is certainly time to recognize the situation, and provide by legislation for the severe punishment of all who preach or practice polygamy, and all who in the name of religion, seek to undermine the allegiance of citizens to the United States. So long as you tolerate the sort of encroachments that are being made upon the Territory by the Utah theocracy, and permit polygamy to be practiced and treasonable doctrines to be preached, you are fostering an element inimical to the peace and security of the Territory.

The Vatican never inaugurated more insidious, aggressive measures for the complete union of church and state, than those set on foot by Brigham Young and other leaders of the mormons. If the Pope were to establish himself in one of our Territories, and from that point undertake to subdue the surrounding States and Territories, the people would speedily suppress the attempt; yet the church of Rome teaches no indecencies, but on the contrary, if all men were to follow its moral and religious instructions, the world would be the better. How then has the mormon church, clothed in sensuality, succeeded in attaining such power and proportions? The question is not difficult to answer, its very grotesqueness and barbarity have been its protection—the country believing a thing so absurd would more quickly fall to pieces if let alone—and for this reason, the efforts of the church to secure temporal power, have been regarded with indifference. But unless this "peculiar people" renounce their criminal practices, and political aims, the time must soon come when it will be the duty of the government to root out mormonism, and all that the term implies. That such a conflict would end in the complete destruction of the mormon church, no sane person doubts.

But, gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, it is not my purpose to urge the adoption of measures for the suppression of the mormon church. All that I now desire is that, this sect be made to obey the laws, and that they shall not be permitted to preach or practice crimes, nor preach or teach doctrines of hostility to the United States

I renew the suggestion heretofore made, namely, that the aid of Congress be invoked, and such needed amendments be made to the laws of the Territory, as will secure the end sought.

I have endeavored to clearly point out the situation to you, candidly and fairly, setting down naught in malice. It is for you to determine just what measures are necessary to eradicate the evils disclosed.

Respectfully,

J. B. NEIL,

Executive Office, Governor.

Boise City, Feb. 5, 1881.